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SUBJECT Arkady Shevchenko

LEA THOMPSON: Tonight we're going to focus on the inner workings of the Kremlin with a man who should know. It was April 6th, 1978 when Arkady Shevchenko defected. Shevchenko was Moscow's highest-ranking diplomatic defector since World War II, a 22-year veteran of the Soviet Foreign Service. What was not known at the time was Shevchenko was also spying on the Soviets. For two and a half years his boss was the CIA.

Shevchenko has once again come to the attention of the American public because of his autobiography, called Breaking with Moscow, a story of the diplomatic inner workings of the Kremlin.

Shevchenko tells some startling revelations about the leaders of the Soviet Union, men he knew well. For instance, he says Nikita Khrushchev set a trap for President Dwight Eisenhower when the Russians shot down Gary Powers' U-2 spy plane in 1960. Shevchenko also says that Khrushchev concluded President Kennedy was a mere boy who would be vulnerable to pressure. And he says that Russian perception partially led to the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

There are other revelations, revelations about a Politburo debate over launching a nuclear strike against China. Revelations on KGB and Central Committee plans to get rid of Egypt's Anwar Sadat, one way or another. Revelations on Russian threats against the life of then-U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold, who died in a mysterious plane crash in the Congo.

And how important was Shevchenko's defection to the U.S.? Imagine a high Reagan Administration official defecting to the U.S.S.R. Then you'll have some idea.

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For the Americans, it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. For Shevchenko, it was the opportunity of a lifetime.

Please meet again on Live at Five Arkady Shevchenko.

We thank you so much for joining us again. It's nice to have you back on Live at Five. So much to talk about. What a remarkable, incredible book.

Most defectors of your rank go into hiding. They assume new identities. We never hear from them again. But you've chosen to go public. Isn't that terribly risky? Don't you worry about being shot on some street corner some night?

ARKADY SHEVCHENKO: Certainly it's risky. But I think, in my mind, and in general, I have no other choice. I couldn't go into the hiding because I didn't like to change from one prison to another. And I wanted to tell what I wanted to tell to the West. And I couldn't just think of being in some hiding place, either in Siberia or Alaska, or whatever it is a place in the world. And my visibility, I would say, the public life which I have now, is my best protection, I think. Because if the Soviets would like to do something, would want to do something against me, I hope, I hope that the American public opinion will know that not only they tried to do something with the public figures in many other countries, but Americans will understand, if the Soviets will do something against me, that it means that they are engaged in terroristic activities on the American soil, here.

THOMPSON: Mr. Shevchenko, jumping a bit, if we can, most people in this country think of the Soviets of being very hard-liners. Are most Soviets as afraid of nuclear war as we in America are?

SHEVCHENKO: I would say so. Certainly the Soviet people is afraid of nuclear war.

THOMPSON: But what about members of the Politburo?

SHEVCHENKO: I would say that even the members of the Politburo, they are concerned very much about the nuclear war. Certainly there are civil defense programs in the Soviet Union which perhaps are more advanced than we have in the United States. But still, even for the members of the Politburo, the highest-ranking Soviet elite politicians, still, they would live like, you know, like rats underground. And they realize that in case of the nuclear war, Moscow or Leningrad would be destroyed entirely. And there is no protection against the Soviet population in a nuclear war.

So, that is something which they have to take into account.

THOMPSON: I want to get into the KGB, if we can, because you write much of it in your book. You say that half of the Soviet personnel, for instance, in New York City is KGB. Is there any way in this country that we can stop the infiltration of the KGB, in your opinion?

SHEVCHENKO: How? This is a free society. And on the other hand, the United Nations and the Soviet mission to the U.N. or U.N. Secretariat, this is a place where there is no limit on the numbers of the Soviets which they can send there.

The only protection which we can have in this country is to watch them very carefully, and not, you know, to try to make economy on the money for the FBI to watch them everywhere. Because in the Soviet Union, you know how much the American diplomats or any kind of people who are in Moscow, how many they would? The only protection is, one, to watch the Soviets. And secondly, Americans have to understand the dealing with any Soviets, they have to be on alert and thinking who is who.

THOMPSON: One question I wanted to ask you about is why the circulated rumor here in Washington that Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin is indeed in charge of most of the intelligence decisions in the United States. Is that true or not true, to your knowledge?

SHEVCHENKO: No, it's not true. It's not true. Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin is a diplomat. He is a very high-ranking Soviet politician and diplomat, and he is not in charge of any kind of intelligence operations. Of course he is aware of what is going on. But the KGB has -- they do have their own man in charge of the operations, and there is a resident, what they call resident (?) in Russian, which they call the man who is in charge of intelligence operation. They check with Dobrynin, but he is not a man who is in charge of intelligence operations.

THOMPSON: Thank you once again. We hope you'll come back and join us again, Arkady Shevchenko. Fascinating story. Fascinating book.